

Tanana Basin Area Plan Amendment

Newsletter # 1

June 10, 2004

Introduction

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is in the initial stages of preparing an amendment to the [1991 Tanana Basin Area Plan](#) (TBAP). The purpose of the amendment is to reassess plan classifications and guidelines that determine which state lands may be conveyable to the Denali Borough. The borough has a remaining entitlement of approximately 30,000 acres. While the borough has selected its lands, they cannot be conveyed under the classifications in the 1991 plan without amending the plan. Public scoping meetings on the plan amendment will be held later this month in Healy, Fairbanks and Anchorage.

The plan amendment will address the Denali Borough's selections and re-evaluate classifications, management intent and guidelines for the state lands that include, and are adjacent to, borough selections. As part of this process, the borough may decide to re-evaluate and re-prioritize selections. The process is anticipated to take one year to complete.

Members of the public who live or work in the borough and vicinity, or who use state lands within the borough, are encouraged to participate in the planning process by providing written comments or attending one of the scoping meetings.

How Much Land is the Borough Entitled to?

Boroughs in Alaska are entitled to state-owned uplands within their boundaries under the Municipal Entitlement Act (AS 29.65.010-140). The Denali Borough's entitlement is 49,789 acres. So far, the borough has selected 72,000 acres. Approximately 16,400 acres have been approved for conveyance, of which 4,150 acres have been patented. The borough's remaining entitlement is 29,239 acres. [Map 1](#)

Which Lands may be Conveyed to the Borough?

The purpose of the Municipal Entitlement Act is to convey state lands to boroughs. This land can be used to expand the tax base; generate revenue through land sales and leases; provide land for community expansion, and for future public facilities and open space. The Municipal Entitlement Act specifies which lands may be conveyed to municipalities. These can include only state general grant lands that are vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved (VUU) within the boundaries of a municipality. State law further defines "VUU lands" as unclassified lands (all state lands in the Denali Borough are now classified by TBAP) and lands classified: Agricultural, Grazing, Material, Settlement, Public Recreation or Resource Management. [Map 2](#) shows which lands are conveyable to the borough (shown with diagonal cross hatching).

Which Lands has the Borough Selected?

The Denali Borough's selections are currently grouped in five blocks. The first (and largest) is located on the east end of the Stampede Road and includes approximately 13,000 acres [Map 3](#). Other selected parcels are located along Healy, Lignite and Montana creeks, along the Yanert and upper Nenana River rivers, and north of Glitter Gulch. With the exception of selections along Healy and Lignite creeks (classified by TBAP as Mining and Wildlife Habitat), the borough has selected lands classified Wildlife Habitat and Public Recreation. As noted above, the Wildlife Habitat and Mining classifications are non-VUU lands and therefore cannot be conveyed under current classifications. In addition, management intent in TBAP calls for the retention of the Nenana River corridor and recommends that it be designated by the Legislature as a Recreation River. A portion of this corridor has been selected by the borough. [Map 4](#) shows lands selected and conveyed to the borough.

How can these Non-VUU Lands be Conveyed?

For the remaining borough selections to be conveyed, the TBAP classifications would have to be changed to VUU classifications. In some cases, TBAP management intent for some areas would also need to be changed. Alternately, the borough could relinquish its existing selections and re-file selections on lands that are conveyable under TBAP. Unfortunately, most of the lands that are VUU under 1991 TBAP are located well off the road system and would be difficult to develop without costly improvements to the existing infrastructure. Other VUU lands are close to the road system that the borough has not selected are too steep to develop or have significant drainage problems.

What does the 1991 TBAP say about Borough Conveyances?

On page 4-14 of TBAP, the plan states, "On December 7, 1990, the Denali Borough was established along the Parks Highway between the Matanuska-Susitna and Fairbanks North Star boroughs. It is the intent of the plan to allow transfer of land to a new municipality, as long as the process for reclassification and retaining state interest areas is followed. Land selections by a new municipality will be reviewed for consistency with the management intent of the management units involved before approval."

Process

The TBAP amendment will identify additional lands that may be available for conveyance to the Denali Borough so the borough can receive its remaining entitlement. Since the borough has selected more acreage than it is entitled to, and some selected lands have significant state interests and will likely be retained, some borough-selected lands will not be made available for conveyance by the plan amendment. When the plan amendment is completed, an amendment to the original plan classification orders will also be issued. If staffing and schedules allow, concurrent with the adoption of these two documents, DNR will prepare a "Final Findings and Decision" that actually conveys the borough its remaining entitlement. As part of this process, DNR has asked the borough to reconsider some of its selections and priorities to better reflect some of the changes that have occurred in the area since the borough filed their original selections.

How can you be Involved?

If you are interested in the planning process, we encourage you to attend a public meeting and submit written comments. Over the summer, we will be reviewing public and agency comments and researching the uses and resources occurring on state lands that are of interest to the borough.

We will keep you updated of the progress of the plan through newsletters like this one and future public meetings. If you received this newsletter in the mail, you are already on our mailing list. If you did not receive this newsletter through the mail, please contact us so that we can send you future plan updates.

Public Meetings

Public scoping meetings will be held in an “open house” format in Healy, Fairbanks and Anchorage. A presentation will be given at 7:00 pm at each of the three meetings.

Anchorage	Monday, June 21	5-9:00 pm	Atwood Building	550 West 7 th Ave. Suite 240
Healy	Wednesday, June 23	5-9:00 pm	Tri-Valley Community Center	
Fairbanks	Thursday, June 24	5:30-8:45 pm	Noel Wien Library	

Written comments are also welcome but must be submitted by Friday, July 16 at 5:00 pm.

For more information or to have your name added to our mailing list, please contact:

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